

Sandhills Students Celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week



SANDHILLS SCHOOL PHOTOS

Teacher Appreciation Week was observed May 4-8, 2020, and the Sandhills fifth and sixth graders had a message for their teachers. They had a little trouble getting disconnected and mixing up the order of their signs, but you get the idea. Great job to all our students and thanks to parents and teachers for all you do!!



Pictured above are the Sandhills fifth and sixth grade students who made signs to honor their teachers for "Teacher Appreciation Week." Pictured: top row, l-r: Caleb Furrow, JD Furrow and Thatcher Teahon. Middle row, l-r: Rylan Moody, Connor Sutton and Hayden Glidden. Front row: Brody Schipporeit.

First COVID-19 Case Reported In Thomas County

The West Central District Health Department (WCDHD) reports four new cases of COVID-19 from Lincoln County and one new case of COVID-19 from Thomas County as of May 6, 2020. Four males, one in his 30s, one in his 40s, one in his 60s, one male under the age of 18, and a female in her 50s. All individuals are isolating at home.

To date, we have tested 800 individuals in the WCDHD jurisdiction for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Of the tested 800, 58 have been positive. Six are travel-related, seven are community spread, 20 are due to close contact, and the remaining five are under investigation.

Sixteen of these cases have recovered according to CDC guidance for isolation and quarantine, 20 are self-isolating at home, and two people have passed away. Thirty-seven cases are within Lincoln County and one is within Thomas County. Stay informed of new cases by visiting the website at <https://wcdhd.org>. Information will be updated daily at 5:45 p.m.

There are no confirmed cases in Logan, McPherson, Hooker, or Arthur counties.

Two deaths related to COVID-19 were reported to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

on Sunday, May 10. One death was a Douglas County resident. A second death was reported and more information is forthcoming.

The total number of COVID-19 related deaths in the state to date is 98. The state case total, as of 5:45 p.m. CDT, is 8,315. Nebraska's COVID-19 case totals are updated daily at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus>.

Local health departments are reporting deaths and cases in their jurisdictions. In the event of a discrepancy between

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Notes From Your Central Sandhills Area Extension Office

Here are a few updates from your Nebraska Extension office serving Blaine, Grant, Hooker and Thomas counties. If you have any questions, please call our office at 308-645-2667.

4-H Virtual County Public Speaking Contest entries are due May 20. 4-H Public Speaking Contests will be conducted virtually at the county and state levels this year. Youth currently enrolled in 4-H may enter this year's contest by uploading their recorded video to be judged. Ribbons will be awarded in all age divisions. Up to 5 youth from the Intermediate and Senior division may be se-

lected at the judge's discretion for the State 4-H Speaking Contest in June. For more information and to get an upload link, please contact Amanda Davis at amanda.davis@unl.edu.

Attention small business owners. Rural Renaissance meets regularly to discuss and share ideas for helping rural businesses and communities. Current discussions are focused on re-opening scenarios. Participation is open. If interested, please contact Jenny Nixon, Nebraska Extension Community Vitality Educator, at jnixon@unl.edu or Mike Burge, Valentine/

Cherry County Economic Development at director@heartcity.com for information on the next meeting scheduled for May 20.

Nebraska Ranch Practicum 2020 has been cancelled.

Due to uncertainties associated with COVID-19, the decision was made to cancel the 2020 Nebraska Ranch Practicum. However, we are looking forward to the 2021 Nebraska Ranch Practicum. Please visit <https://nebraskaranchpracticum.unl.edu/> or email T.L. Meyer at t.l.meyer@unl.edu for more information.

Collaborative Effort Leads To Arrest Of Pursuit Suspect

A collaborative effort of several law enforcement agencies has resulted in the arrest of the suspect involved in a pursuit last Tuesday near Brady.

At approximately 7:50 p.m. Tuesday evening, May 5, a trooper located a Chevrolet Silverado, which had been reported stolen in Cozad. The trooper observed the vehicle speeding at 100 miles per hour as it was traveling westbound on Highway 50 in eastern Lincoln County. The trooper attempted a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled.

The trooper initiated a pursuit, which turned north on Haythorn Road before circling back and returning to Highway 50 westbound. As the vehicle continued driving at ap-

proximately 100 miles per hour, NSP dispatch was able to confirm the identity of the suspect. Troopers then discontinued the pursuit. The entire pursuit lasted approximately nine minutes.

Wednesday morning, a local resident located the Silverado, which had been abandoned on Tin Camp Road, south of Highway 92 in McPherson County. The McPherson County Sheriff's Office responded and confirmed that it was the vehicle that had been stolen and had been involved in the pursuit with troopers Tuesday evening.

Several law enforcement agencies, including deputies from the McPherson, Logan, and Lincoln

County Sheriff's Offices, the NSP Aviation Support Division, and NSP Police Service Dog Division, reported to the scene to assist in a search of the area to locate the suspect. Law enforcement received a report that the suspect was at an abandoned farmstead and were quickly able to locate him and take him into custody without further incident at approximately 2:25 p.m.

Shawn Grizzle, 33, of Cozad, was arrested for operating a motor vehicle to avoid arrest, theft by unlawful taking, willful reckless driving, and as a habitual criminal. Grizzle was lodged in Lincoln County Jail. Additional charges are pending from Dawson County.

Congressman Smith Says Livestock Producers Are Critical

By Congressman Adrian Smith

In rural states like Nebraska, agriculture is a way of life. The men and women who dedicate their lives to feeding the world provide a service like no other. For so long, American agriculture has enjoyed unprecedented success, producing food more effectively and efficiently than any other place at any other time in history. In fact, access to quality food has become so commonplace it is often taken for granted. However, in times like these we are reminded of how crucial food production is to the well-being of our country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit all of agriculture hard, particularly livestock producers, who are rightfully concerned about the combination of declining prices for the animals they have worked so hard to raise and high prices for processed beef at retail resulting from processing slowdowns and record demand at grocery stores. Our producers work overtime to feed our nation, and they deserve more than our

thanks.

The CARES Act, passed by Congress as part of the COVID-19 response, contained needed assistance to livestock producers in the form of replenishing the Commodity Credit Corporation and additional assistance payments to farmers and ranchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). I have written letters to USDA to ensure these programs meet the needs of both cattle and pork producers in this challenging time.

Last week, I hosted a webinar alongside USDA Undersecretary Greg Ibach and Farm Service Agency Administrator Richard Fordyce, to answer questions from farmers, ranchers, and others throughout the Third District about implementation of these programs. It is important producers know how they can access support during this difficult time, and I am grateful to all those who participated.

President Trump and his administration are taking other actions to support continued protein production. I

strongly support President Trump's decision to issue an Executive Order invoking the Defense Production Act to keep meat processing plants open. This order makes no doubt about how essential meat and poultry are to Americans, eliminating jurisdictional guessing games and allowing USDA to supplement efforts packers have already undertaken to protect their employees. I also support USDA's expansion of an ongoing investigation into cattle markets to ensure producers aren't being treated unfairly because of market conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bottom line: We must strengthen and prioritize the producers who continue to ensure a strong food supply. We must always remember our nation's food comes directly from the extraordinary effort of individuals in the agricultural sector. Rest assured, I will continue working to ensure our producers receive the deserved attention from Washington during this difficult time.

There will be no Memorial Day program this year at Hillcrest Cemetery in Thedford on May 25 due to COVID-19.

Pandemic may lead to 75,000 "deaths of despair" study reports

COVID-19 has directly claimed tens of thousands of U.S. lives, but conditions stemming from the novel coronavirus — rampant unemployment, isolation and an uncertain future — could lead to 75,000 deaths from drug or alcohol abuse and suicide, new research suggests.

Deaths from these causes are known as "deaths of despair." And the COVID-19 pandemic may be accelerating conditions that lead to such deaths.

"Deaths of despair are tied to multiple factors, like unemployment, fear and dread, and isolation. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were already an unprecedented number of deaths of despair. We wanted to estimate how this pandemic would change that number moving forward," said one of the study's authors, Benjamin Miller. He's

chief strategy officer for the Well Being Trust in Oakland, California.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Well Being Trust reported that more lives had been lost to deaths of despair in 2017 than ever before.

"The primary response at the time was to look at the opioid epidemic, but that didn't even come close to cracking all of the issues of mental health related to deaths of despair," Miller explained.

Many things can contribute to deaths of despair, including loneliness, isolation, a lack of belonging, limited access to affordable health care, systemic racism, trauma and financial concerns, like a lack of housing and food, according to the Well Being Trust.

The researchers pointed to several factors from the pandemic that could make problems worse:

- The potential for a se-

rious, even deadly infection from a previously unknown microbe.

- An unprecedented economic shutdown.
- Skyrocketing unemployment.
- Months-long social isolation (mandated in many states), sometimes with no set end.
- Uncertainty about treatment and prevention strategies.

The new study combined information on deaths of despair in 2018 (nearly 182,000) with projected unemployment levels from 2020 to 2029, and economic modeling.

The upshot: With a rapid recovery and the smallest impact on deaths of despair, the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to nearly 28,000 additional deaths of despair.

But a very slow recovery

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